



A Celtic Pilgrimage to Ireland

A Journey to the Landscape of the Soul

"This land, like a mirror, turns you inward."

-Gwendolyn MacEwen

September 9 - 21, 2009

We invite you to make a pilgrim's journey across this green island, the land of Eire, steeped in legend, mystery and natural beauty. In her sacred springs and groves, shrines and chapels, stories and songs, Ireland reflects a deep reverence for the land that the ancients claim as a pathway to the divine. Her extraordinary landscape, sacred stories and legendary people invite us into a "timeless time" where we can listen more deeply to our own heart's rhythm and awaken to the stirrings of the spirit.

This fall join us for a meaningful experience of the Emerald Isle. From the pre-Celtic hillforts to dramatic seascapes and ancient standing stones and hedgerows, Ireland is a land of gracious discoveries. Our itinerary offers an introduction to Ireland for travelers who want to go beyond the tourist façade and explore the deeper landscape that may form, inform and transform those who step out on the pilgrim's path.

We'll explore the "Golden Age" of Ireland, when the rest of Europe was plunged into the Dark Ages and the monasteries of Eire kept the flame of knowledge alight. We will visit ancient Celtic sites and learn how they were absorbed into this new religion called Christianity. There will be opportunities to be in community, to share poetry, music and story, and there will time apart, to rest, listen, write, pray, walk and dream.

The guides for this journey are Linda McKinnish Bridges PhD, Celtic scholar and Adjunct Professor at the School of Divinity, Wake Forest University and Kathy Spaar, a long-time educator, retreat leader and currently on staff at the Center for Prayer and Pilgrimage, Washington National Cathedral.



Glendalough's Round Tower



Ireland's West Coast

The cost of this itinerary, per person, double occupancy is:

Washington Dulles departure:	\$4390
Land only (no airfare included):	\$3520
Single supplement:	\$650

The following services are included:

- Airfare:** Round trip air on Aer Lingus from Washington to Dublin, returning from Shannon. All taxes, etc. included.
- Hotels:** 11 nights accommodation in first-class hotels. All hotel taxes and service charges included.
- Coaching:** All ground transportation as detailed in the itinerary.
- Meals:** Full breakfast daily, 1 picnic lunch, 11 dinners.
- Guides:** Your hosts Linda Bridgea and Kathy Spaar plus a local guide in Dublin, fully-qualified driver/guide for 2 days from Dublin and local guides on the Aran Islands.
- Entrances:** Entrance fees to all sites included in the itinerary.
- Insurance:** Complete travel insurance including cancellation coverage.





Wednesday, September 9th. Evening departure from Washington Dulles aboard Aer Lingus' direct flight to Dublin. **Overnight: Plane**

Thursday, September 10th. Early morning arrival at Dublin Airport, where you will be met by your Discover Europe tour escort. Just north of Dublin Airport, the Boyne Valley is the most important archeological site in Ireland, with the Megalithic Passage Tomb at Newgrange, built around 3200 BC. The kidney-shaped mound covers an area of more than an acre. The passage and chamber are illuminated by the winter solstice sunrise, and the image of the tri-spiral design inside the chamber is probably the most famous Irish megalithic symbol, often referred to as Celtic but carved at least 2500 years before the Celts arrived. We'll also visit the Mound of the Hostages, the oldest monument on the Hill of Tara, dating to 2500-3000 BC. We'll arrive at our hotel in Glendalough with plenty of time to unpack and relax before dinner. **(D)** **Overnight: Glendalough**

Friday, September 11th. Glendalough is literally the Valley of Two lakes – the Gleann Dá Loch – and it was here in the 6th century AD that St. Kevin founded the monastery that dominates the site today. Our first day, today, will be spent exploring the lower site which contains the majority of the surviving buildings and the visitor center. Dinner at our hotel this evening. **(B, D)** **Overnight: Glendalough**



Saturday, September 12th. A full day in Dublin today offers something for everyone. Our morning bus tour with a local guide will start with impressive St. Patrick's Cathedral, burial place of Jonathan Swift, and then visit Trinity College to view the celebrated Book of Kells. We'll end at the National Museum with its spectacular collection of Celtic treasures. The afternoon will be free to pursue individual interests: the well-trodden James Joyce trail, the Guinness brewery or the Chester-Beatty Museum (home of ancient Biblical manuscripts). Fashionable Grafton Street offers superb shopping and on the museum front, there's the fabulous National Gallery. Your guide will be available to provide other suggestions and advice. We return to our hotel for dinner. **(B, D)** **Overnight: Glendalough**

Sunday, September 13th. This morning we'll take a picnic lunch with us and walk up the valley to the upper lake. The rest of the day will be free to hike up into the Wicklow Mountains for as far as your legs and inclinations take you. Dinner is included at the hotel this evening. **(B, L, D)** **Overnight: Glendalough**

Monday, September 14th. Today is free to spend in peaceful meditation. Dinner at the hotel. **(B, D)** **Overnight: Glendalough**

Tuesday, September 15th. Leaving Glendalough, we travel across country stopping first at Kildare (in Gaelic Cill Dara, or the church of the oak-wood) to visit St. Brigid's Cathedral. St Brigid (or St. Bride) founded the first of several religious settlements here in 490 AD and her eternal flame has been kept burning almost continuously ever since. Sister Mary Mineham will greet us and talk to us about St. Brigid. Our next stop will be at Clonmacnoise, one of the most important early Christian monastic foundations in the country. We'll continue to Galway, the "City of the Tribes," where we'll have dinner at our hotel. **(B, D)** **Overnight: Galway**

Wednesday, September 16th. A full day around the Connemara coast takes you through Joyce Country and some of the most beautiful scenery in Ireland. Sampling a range of what the area has to offer, we'll visit Clifden, the main town of Connemara, which attracts artists and fishermen; Kylemore Abbey renowned for its Victoria walled gardens and Gothic chapel; and Ireland's holiest mountain, Croagh Patrick. Our day will also bring into focus the writings of John O'Donohue. We end at Rossaveel, where we board the ferry to Inish Mor. **(B, D)** **Overnight: Inish Mor**

Thursday, Sept. 17th - Saturday, Sept 19th. Three full days on Inish Mor, the largest of the Aran Islands. Sightseeing of the island introduces the geography and history of these isolated settlements which have been blessedly bypassed for the "progress" of recent centuries. We'll have meetings with Padraigin Clancy and Father Dara Molloy and visits to Dun Aengus and Na Seacht Teampaill. One day will be reserved for quiet contemplation. On one evening we'll attend a ceilidh, an evening of local music and dance (if available). **(B, D)** **Overnight: Inish Mor**



Sunday, September 20th. This morning we leave the Aran Islands by ferry back to the mainland, landing at Doolin in County Clare. Our bus will meet us for a short tour of the Burren, a dramatic landscape that has a mythical austerity to it and is a geological wonder of unremitting bleakness. In late spring, however, the harsh limestone and shale crevices are filled with an extraordinary burst of wildflower color. We'll continue to our hotel in Ennis, arriving in time for dinner. **(B, D)** **Overnight: Ennis**

Monday, September 21st. Morning transport to Shannon Airport for the returning Aer Lingus flight to Washington Dulles. **(B)**